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THE CALL OF THE GENTILES: A POETICAL ESSAY.

To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. ROMANS ii. 10.

BY THE
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MDCCLXXXII.

A Clauſe of Mr. SEATON's Will, Dated *Oct.* 8, 1738.

I Give my Kiſlingbury Eſtate to the Univerſity of Cambridge for ever: the Rents of which ſhall be diſpoſed of yearly by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, as he the Vice-Chancellor, the Maſter of Clare-Hall, and the Greek Profeſſor for the time being, or any two of them ſhall agree. Which three perſons aforeſaid ſhall give out a Subject, which Subject ſhall for the firſt Year be one or other of the Perfections or Attributes of the Supreme Being, and ſo the ſucceeding Years, till the Subject is exhauſted; and afterwards the Subject ſhall be either Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, &c. or whatever elſe may be judged by the Vice-Chancellor, Maſter of Clare-Hall, and Greek Profeſſor, to be moſt conducive to the honour of the Supreme Being and recommendation of Virtue. And they ſhall yearly diſpoſe of the Rent of the above Eſtate to that Maſter of Arts, whoſe Poem on the Subject given ſhall be beſt approved by them. Which Poem I ordain to be always in Engliſh, and to be printed; the expence of which ſhall be deducted out of the product of the Eſtate, and the reſidue given as a reward for the Compoſer of the Poem, or Ode, or Copy of Verſes.

Jeſus College, Oct. 28, 1782.

AT a Meeting in Jeſus College, at the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge, the Rev. Dr. *Beadon*, Vice-Chancellor, and the Rev. Mr. *Cooke*, Greek Profeſſor, being the major Part of the Perſons appointed to diſpoſe of Mr. SEATON's Prize, did unanimouſly adjudge the Prize for the preſent Year to Mr. SPENCER MADAN, of Trinity College, for his Poem on *The Call of the Gentiles.*

R. Beadon, Vice-Chancellor.
W. Cooke, Greek Profeſſor.

ERRATUM.

Page 3. line 12. Put a *comma* after Waves, inſtead of the *ſemicolon.*

THE CALL OF THE GENTILES.

SPIRIT of Prophecy, myſterious Gueſt!
Thou roſe-lip'd Herald of the coming Day,
Parent of Light and Truth, all Hail! thy Pow'r
Was ſeen, thy early Voice, obſcure and faint,
Struck the dull Organs of this guilty World,
What time, from ſhapeleſs Chaos newly form'd,
Creation yet was young! Benignly Thou,
(At the dread Hour, when Heav'n's eternal King
Smote the triumphant Enemy of Eve,
And fix'd him prone in Duſt) Benignly Thou,

Ev'n in the Moment* of Almighty Wrath,
Deſcending ſwift upon the Seraph-Wing
Of Inſpiration, wafted by the Breath
Of God himſelf, didſt lend thy pitying Aid,
Thy Guidance to the weak extended Arm
Of grov'ling Man, who erſt in Darkneſs lay,
Impervious Darkneſs, Ignorance and Death! —
And You, ye venerable holy Seers!
Iſaiah, mighty Prophet! and the Reſt,
A choſen Fellowſhip of Saints! on whom
In hallow'd Beam the myſtic Influence
Of that deſcending Spirit firſt was pour'd,
Deign to accept the Purpoſe, not the Deed,
If in the Tranſport of impatient Zeal
The Muſe, a haſty Meſſenger, invoke
Your awful Names thus rudely; and at once
Speak the big Theme that labors in her Soul!
O rather hear, Immortal Spirits! hear,
And patronize the Numbers you inſpire:
O ſanctify the bold ambitious Joy,

(For

* It is well worthy of Remark (as Bp. Newton has obſerved) that a conſolatory Promiſe of Man's future Redemption *accompanies* the very Sentence pronounced againſt the Serpent, the *firſt* Prophecy that occurs in Holy Writ. — See Geneſis iii. 15.

(For ſure it is Ambition, it is Joy
Unſpeakable!) to trace the copious Stream
Of all-redeeming Mercy to its Source;
To mark, in Retroſpect, its early Path,
Through the dark Mazes of retiring Time,
Till the faint Eye perceive the thick'ning Gloom
Arreſt its baffled Labor; cloſing All
In awful and impenetrable Night!
But ah! the wearied Orb abaſh'd recoils,
And now returning on the downward Stream
Skims the prone Surface; — wide and ſtill more wide
The Tide of Mercy ſpreads its gath'ring Waves;
Still devious, ſtill connected, flowing ſtill,
And ſtill increaſing, thro' the Vale of Years;
While, ever and anon, the fruitful Flood
Calls, in its Courſe, ſome Bleſſing into Birth,
Some latent Truth, ſome Miracle foretold,
Faſt rip'ning into Life, at thy Command,
Thou God of Prophecy! Thou God of Power! —

Now in the Fulneſs of appointed Time
The ſplendid Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe;

Aroſe—and, with his own preluſive Star,
Beam'd a new Luſtre o'er the conſcious Eaſt.
All hail, thou riſing Glory! hail to Thee,
Light of the World! My Saviour and my God!
Thee, Jeſus, thee I ſing, admire, adore;
Whether I view thee, in thy humbler Sphere,
Suffus'd each brighter Beauty with a Cloud
Of dull Mortality, ſuppreſs'd thy Beams,
But not extinguiſh'd, by the earthly Veil;
Or worſhip thee, as now, *Inviſible*;
For now, in awful Majeſty ſublime,
Far above mortal Ken, reſuming all
Th' intolerable Splendor of the Godhead,
Again in Light ineffable thou dwell'ſt,
"Eternal," like thy Manſion, "* in the Heav'ns!"—
But whither would the vain preſumptuous Muſe
Purſue her Flight? Why tempts her waxen Wing
The Blaze intenſe of "pureſt Empyrean?"
Still, ſtill, at Diſtance infinite, remains
The ſoaring Summit! Whither would'ſt thou climb,
Weak, ignorant Intruder? O beware,—

The

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

The Breath that cannot poliſh, may defile.—
And ſure a Deity, a God on Earth,
Omnipotence degraded into Man,
May ſerve to ſatisfy thy boldeſt Wiſh,
And foil thy beſt Endeavour!—O deſcend,
And bluſh to own thine arrogant Attempt!
What? would thy Pride affect a higher Aim
Than Jeſus upon Earth! Exhauſtleſs Theme
Of Adoration, Gratitude and Love!—
* Awake, awake, Put on thy Strength, O Zion!
Put on, Jeruſalem, thou holy City,
Thy Garment of Rejoicing! Quick aſcend
Thy lofty Seat, and ſhake thyſelf from Duſt!
Thou too, proud Citadel, aſpiring Dome,
Thou Temple of the living God! Unfold
Thy brazen Entrance; lift aloft in Air
The fretted Portal; bid the burniſh'd Roof—
—Yet hold, 'tis Mockery all!—'tis idle Pomp!—
O rather bid the buſy Hand of Toil
Forſake thy growing Tow'rs! Bid curious Art
Suſpend her nicer Tool! Rough Labor pauſe,

* Iſaiah lii.

In ſolemn Sign of Worſhip! Yonder, lo!
Already have thy conſecrated Walls
Receiv'd the Infant-God! He comes, he comes,
A Holy Firſt-born*! (Offering fit for Heav'n!)
And ſanctifies thine Altar with a Smile!
Methinks e'en now, from Mary's happy Arms,
I ſee him ſweetly ſhed that Smile of Love;
Itſelf the Child of Heav'n! Methinks I ſee
Benevolence and meek complacent Joy
Diffuſe their mingled Luſtre o'er his Face,
Beam in his Eye, and bluſh upon his Cheek!
Before theſe Beauties, thrilling thro' the Soul,
How fade, how vaniſh from the mental Sight
The boaſted Glories of thy richer Pile,
O Solomon! the prouder Arch; the Cloud
Of radiant Shechinah; the maſſive Throne;
The Gems of Ophir, and "Parvaïm Gold!"
What brighter Raptures didſt Thou, Simeon! feel —
Within thy righteous Boſom, when on Thee
The new-born Deity caſt many' a Look
Of infant Joy, ſhed more than infant Tears,

And

* Luke ii. 22, 23.

And ſtretch'd his little Arms to welcome thine;
When ſoon encircling in thy fond Embrace
The Solace of thine Age, thy laſt, beſt Hope,
Thy ready Tongue the great Event proclaim'd,
And hail'd the Promiſe of thy peaceful End!
O let me ponder on the pious Strain,
And breathe anew the Rapture of thy Soul!
" Lord, I am thankful! and, in thy good Time,
" Depart in Peace, according to thy Word!
" For lo! mine Eyes, thy Servant's Eyes, have ſeen
" Thy ſaving Health, prepar'd before all People:
" A Light, 'a Day-ſtar *' to the wand'ring World,
" The Gentile's Guidance, and thy People's Glory!"
The Prophet paus'd — Amaze and holy Awe
Beat high in Joſeph's Heart; and Tears diſplay'd
Their ſilent Eloquence from Mary's Eye! —
— Turn we awhile from Scenes of tender Joy
That ſtrike Expreſſion dumb — Prepare we now
(And who not ſhudders to his inmoſt Soul?)
To mark the hard Impenitence, the Pride
Of blind, preſumptive, ſelf-deſtroying Man!
Almighty Providence! And can it be

That

* 2 Pet. i. 19.

That Mercy ever ſhould deſcend ſo low,—
Deſcend ſo low—in vain! O Grief of Heart,
Too ſure it hath! And Iſrael's ſullen Sons
Defeat thy Wiſh; the proffer'd Boon refuſe!
Say, Men of Judah! what, would nought avail
To daſh that opiate Bane of Prejudice
With ſome reviving Virtue? Could no Charm
Potent be found to free from Error's Film
The clouded Eye? None found to ſooth the Rage
Of bigot-Superſtition?—See, they fly!
The choſen Flock, as with Contagion ſeiz'd,
Fly ruthleſs from the Shepherd's Hand—that Hand,
Which oft hath led them ſporting with Delight
To the full Paſture and refreſhing Stream!
O dire Ingratitude! Thou Parent-ſin
Of all beſide! Thyſelf a thouſand Sins!
Say, were the Dews of Heav'n, the ſacred Tears
Of Chriſt himſelf, too ſparingly beſtow'd,
To melt the wayward Hardneſs of thy Heart?
Or was the Charmer's Voice too faintly heard,
To merit thine Attention? O Thou Adder,
Compound of Ill!—As poiſonous and as deaf!

But not to Iſrael's haughty Sons alone
Came the glad Tidings of a Saviour born;
Not ſo repuls'd th' Almighty's outſtretch'd Arm,
Not ſo confin'd his Love! The Dove-like Form
Of Mercy, iſſuing forth, thro' every Clime,
Flies to and fro, to Earth's extremeſt Verge,
Speeds her light Way, and plies her eager Search,
Unwilling to return if chance ſhe find
Whereon to reſt her Foot! Long-time intent
O'er Thee, Judæa, ſelf-devoted Land!
With many an anxious Pauſe and circling Flight
The myſtic Wanderer hung! Full oft ſhe ſought
Thy Tow'rs, Jeruſalem, thy fated Walls,
And wept o'er all the Scene! Full oft ſhe call'd,
(E'en as a Hen collects her callow Brood)
And yet ye would not! "O ungrateful Race!"
In deep Deſpair the lovely Exile cried;
Then ſhook ſoft Pity from her Wings — and fled. —
Happy the Few, on whoſe ſelected Heads
The plenteous Day-ſpring from on high deſcended
In kindly Viſitation! Happy They
On whom that Show'r of heav'n-born Pity fell;

— Nor fell unfruitful! While impaſſion'd Hope,
Firm Faith, that wiſely builds on Reaſon's Rock,
Strong-working, drew them from the crooked Path;
Taught them at length with ſteady Eye to bear
The growing Light; to hail with grateful Joy
Each Emanation of thoſe holy Truths
That Jeſus pour'd upon their temper'd Souls!
Theſe, not unaided by ſupernal Grace,
And fraught with Confidence and holy Zeal,
Sure Teſt of true Converſion! theſe, O Lord,
Were all thy ſcanty Followers; by Thee
Firſt call'd, firſt reſcued from a World of Woe,
To ſpread Salvation into diſtant Climes;
And tell the meaneſt Habitant of Earth
"Glad Tidings of great Joy!" — Much-envied Lot
Of Miniſtry like this! Thrice happy State
Of Servitude, (if Freedom's choiceſt Name
Befit not rather) happier, richer far
Than all that Tyranny enthron'd could boaſt,
Or the proud Sceptre of Imperial Rome!
Conſcious I quit the ſtill-increaſing Theme
Of Praiſe and Wonder! Mute admiring Joy

Muſt paint a Scene the Muſe can never reach!
'Tis not for Us, unweeting Babblers all,
To trace with fit Deſign the holy Group
Forth iſſuing, for the glorious Work prepar'd,
Their cry Salvation! — God himſelf their Guide!
For Us ſuffice it rather, firſt to haſte
In ſilent Joy, like Abraham from his Tent,
And welcome their Approach; — then quick retire,
Like Lot from Sodom, anxious to be ſav'd,
Thankful to hear, and happy to obey! —
'Tis not for Us, to watch with prying Eye
The ſecret Workings of Almighty Power;
To tell how Heav'n's diffuſive Love prevail'd
With gradual Effort o'er the conſcious Soul;
Or ſtruck, inviſible, with ſudden Ray
Of pureſt Knowledge, and regen'rate Joy,
Th' *unconſcious* Heathen; 'till at once arouz'd
His ev'ry Senſe and ev'ry glowing Thought
Start from its Lethargy, and ſpring to Life!
Suffice it, that we know the mighty Cauſe,
And breathe unceaſing Songs of Gratitude
To Him, whoſe Bleſſing far and wide diſplay'd

The rich Effuſion, till One vaſt Embrace
Encircled all Creation! — Gracious Heaven!
O not in vain be theſe thy Mercies ſhewn
To any Child of Man! Remember, Lord,
And ſave the Creature of thy plaſtic Hand,
Whether Thou view'ſt him wand'ring on the Waſte
Of Polar Zembla, Continent of Ice!
Or breathing rude Idolatry and Vows
Of proſtrate Adoration at the Shrine
Of Thibet's hapleſs Lama! Wretched Being,
Leſs free, leſs happy, leſs a God than e'en
His vileſt Votary! — Yet not alone
To the ſwart Savage of the barb'rous Eaſt,
The beaded Hottentot, or naked Slave
Who toils, untutor'd, in the guilty Mine,
Reveal thy ſaving Arm! But turn, O turn
The blinder Infidel, of every Name,
Or groſs Mahometan, or ſtubborn Jew,
Or deſperate Atheiſt, who mocks thy Pow'rs
With purpos'd Inſult! — Turn them, Lord, and ſave
And win them to thyſelf! O quickly bring
To * Sharon's Fold and Achor's happy Vale

Thy

Thy full united Flock! — And if the Muſe,
Impatient for thy Glory, ſtill may breathe
One added Prayer, O bleſs the pious Zeal,
And crown with glad Succeſs the lab'ring Sons
Of that beſt Charity, whoſe annual Mite
Sends forth thy Goſpel to the diſtant Iſles!
So ſhall the Nations, reſcued Myriads! hear,
And own thy Mercy over all thy Works!
So from each Corner of th' enlighten'd Earth
Inceſſant Peals of Univerſal Joy
Shall hail Thee, Heavenly Father, God of All! —

T. D. E. M.